

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 3621

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SCUL, PINT, CZ
SUBJECT: A FORMER CZECH JOURNALIST'S VIEW OF LOCAL POLITICS AT
YEAR'S END

USIA FOR IEU

1. SUMMARY: THERE ARE STILL DOZENS OF LESSER-KNOWN POLITICAL
PRISONERS IN CZECHOSLOVAK JAILS; THE STB IS AS ACTIVE AS EVER,
ALTHOUGH THERE IS AN APPARENT DECLINE IN POLICE BURTALITY. THERE
WERE ATTEMPTS TO INTIMIDATE TWO FORMERLY PROMINENT POLITICAL
PERSONALITIES THIS YEAR, BUT THINGS ARE QUIET AT YEAR'S END.
END SUMMARY.

2. THERE ARE STILL "DOZENS" OF POLITICAL PRISONERS IN CZECHOSLOVAK
JAILS, BUT ALL WELL-KNOWN '68 AND '72 PERSONALITIES HAVE BEEN
RELEASED. THIS IS THE OPINION OF A FORMERLY PROMINENT PRAGUE
JOURNALIST AND PARTY ACTIVIST, NOW TENDING FURNACES FOR A LIVING.
THE JOURNALIST CITED AS ONE EXAMPLE OF SUCH UNKNOWN PRISONERS THE
MAYOR OF THE NORTHERN BOHEMIAN TOWN OF VANS DORF WHO INCURRED PARTY
WRATH FOR AMONG OTHER THINGS, RETURNING CHURCH BELLS TO A CHURCH
THAT HAD ITS BELLS REMOVED BY THE GERMANS.

3. THE SOURCE, WHO STOPPED BY THE PAO'S FOR A HOLIDAY DRINK, SAID
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THAT MILAN HUBL, A HISTORIAN, RECENTLY RELEASED FROM PRISON AFTER
NEARLY FOUR YEARS OF INCARCERATION, WANTS TO LEGALLY FIGHT FOR A
FULL ACQUITTAL. THE JOURNALIST, WHO HAD SEEN HUBL EARLIER IN THE
WEEK, SAID THE LATTER HAS DECLINED AN OPPORTUNITY TO EMIGRATE AND
TEACH MODERN HISTORY IN A SCANDANAVIAN UNIVERSITY IN FOAVOR OF
TRYING TO REGAIN HIS JOB AT CHARLES UNIVERSITY. SOURCE SAID HE

THOUGHT

THIS WAS A "COURAGEOUS BUT MAD GESTURE" ON HUBL'S PART.

4. SOURCE SAID THAT AT SAME TIME AS FOUR PROMINENT POLITICAL DISSIDENTS WERE BEING RELEASED FROM PRISON, STB CONDUCTED ROUNDUP OF 7 OR EIGHT OF THEIR ASSOCIATES FOR PROLONGED, BUT NOT BURTAL, INTERROGATION. MESSAGE WAS "A SIGNAL; WE CAN FREE SOME OF YOU, BUT WE CAN CRUSH OTHERS OF YOU." SAID STB WENT TO GARBAGE DUMP WHERE JAROSLAV SUK, C. 26, SON OF FORMER DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT PRESS AGENCY (CTK), WORKS AS A FURNACE TENDER, AND PICKED UP A CACHE OF SAMIZDAT PUBLICATIONS SUK HAD KEPT THERE TO READ IN HIS SPARE TIME. YOUNG SUK HAD BEEN JAILED FOR TWO YEARS AND RECENTLY RELEASED. SOURCE SAID HE IS IDEOLOGICALLY IDENTIFIABLE WITH "GERMAN RADICAL EXTREMIST FACTION," WHICH REPORTEDLY HAD SOME SUPPORT AMONG YOUNG CZECHS. SUK WAS INTERROGATED, AND SEVERAL ISSUES OF LISTY, THE ROME-BASED PRO-DUBCEK EMIGRE PUBLICATION, AND INFORMAT, A MORE RADICAL-ECELECTIC PERIODICAL PUBLISHED IN WEST GERMANY, WERE CONFISCATED.

5. SOURCE SAID STB IS BEHAVING IN "MILD" MANNER THIS HOLIDAY SEASON AND CZECHOSLOVAK POLICE APPEAR TO BE DIVIDED OVER WHICH APPROACH TO TAKE IN DEALING WITH POLITICAL PRISONERS. CITED AS EXAMPLE EXCHANGE BETWEEN HUBL AND OSTRAVA PRISON HEAD. SAID LATTER TOLD PRISONER HE WAS UNDER VERBAL INSTRUCTIONS FROM PRAGUE STB TO BE TOUGH WITH HUBL, BUT THAT HE REQUESTED CONNIRMATION OF WHAT TO DO IN WRITING BECAUSE "IF I DON'T HAVE INSTRUCTIONS IN WRITING, I WILL BE ON TRIAL IN TWO OR THREE YEARS."

6. SIMILARLY, A WRITTEN REPORT ON SEVERAL PRISONER'S HEALTH, DONE BY CONFIDENTIAL

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A BRNO PHYSICIAN, CRITICIZED "HORRIBLE PRISON CONDITIONS." REPORT WENT FROM MINISTRY OF JUSTICE TO CENTRAL COMMITTEE, WHO TOLD POLICE TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS. "WE ARE CZECHS, NOT RUSSIANS," SOURCE SAID, "AND WE WILL NOT ULTIMATELY BEHAVE TOWARD EACH OTHER AS THEY DO," ADDING THAT HOW TO TREAT POLITICAL PRISONERS IS A SUBJECT OVER WHICH STB IS DIVIDED.

7. IN MID-NOVEMBER DR. FRANTISEK KRIEGAL, C. 65, A JEW, AND ONLY MEMBER OF GOC LEADERSHIP IN MOSCOW IN AUGUST 1968 NOT TO SIGN THE PROTOCOL LEGITIMIZING THE SOVIET INVASION, WAS ATTACKED IN HIS VINOHRADY APARTMENT.

8. KREIGAL'S WIFE OPENED THEIR APARTMENT DOOR AT FRIDAY NOON TO TWO MEN WITH BLACK MASKS AND GLOVES, WHO TRIED TO BEAT HER. WHILE HER HUSBAND STRUGGLED WITH THEM, SHE CRIED OUT THE WINDOW "MURDERERS ARE TRYING TO KILL US." THEY REPORTEDLY FLED. NEXT DAY KRIEGAL, WHO GAVE INTERVIEW ABOUT MATTER TO VIENNA

RADIO STATION, FOUND IN HIS MAIL BOX A MESSAGE CUT FROM LETTERS FROM VARIOUS NEWSPAPERS SAYING IN POORLY WORDED CZECH "THIS IS THE LAST WARNING, YOU JEWISH SWINE. DO NOT CAUSE US ANY FURTHER PROBLEMS. THE PALESTINIAN LIBERATION ORGANIZATION."

9. SOURCE, WHO SAID HE SAW KRIEGAL WHEN LATTER OPENED ENVELOPE, BELIEVES IT WAS A STB GESTURE TO INTIMIDATE A NON-SUPPORTER, SAME WAY AUGUST 12, 1976 EFFORT BY "VANDALS" TO BREAK GLASSES OF FORMER FM JIRI HAJEK, WHO DENOUNCED '68 INVASION IN UN, WAS A SIMILAR GESTURE.

10. HAJEK'S 120 PAGE WORK ON "CZ SPRING OF 1968, ITS INTERNATIONAL ASPECTS," REPORTEDLY IS A SAMIZDAT FAVORITE. SO IS AN IRONICAL WORK THAT SIMPLY PUBLISHES 1961 SOVIET FIVE YEAR PLAN PRESENTED TO 22ND PARTY CONGRESS, IN WHICH IT WAS ANNOUNCED SU WOULD HAVE ABUNDANT CONSUMER GOODS BY 1980 AND ITS ECONOMY WOULD OVERTAKE US BY EARLY 70'S. SAMIZDAT WORK JUXTAPOSES CURRENT STATISTICS FOR BOTH ECONOMIES, AND LETS PEOPLE DRAW THEIR OWN CONCLUSIONS. CONFIDENTIAL

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11. IN SUMMARY, JOURNALIST SAID HE SAW PRESENT PERIOD AS "MILD BUT FULL HOLIDAY

RESPITE," AND THAT WHILE CZECHS ARE PLEASED WITH LIBERATION OF FOUR HIGHLY-VISIBLE PRISONERS, "NOBODY BELIEVES THERE IS ANY FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE FOR THE BETTER."

12. CITED SITUATION OF VERA STOVICKOVA, FORMERLY WELL-KNOWN RADIO COMMENTATOR FOR CZ RADIO, WHO LAST YEAR EARNED 5,000 KCS. AS A FREE-LANCE TRANSLATOR OF TECHNICAL WORKS FRIENDS PASS TO HER TO TRANSLATE UNDER THEIR NAMES. REFERRED TO OWN SITUATION OF TRYING TO MOVE FROM BEING FURNACE STOKER TO TRUCK DISPATCHER, BUT BEING TOLD LACK OF PARTY BACKING WOULD PREVENT HIM FROM GETTING SUCH AN ADVANCEMENT. SOURCE REGARDS NEARLY THREE-QUARTERS OF A MILLION CZECHOSLOVAKS WHO LOST THEIR JOBS IN POST-68 SHAKEDOWNS AS A "LOST GENERATION," SAID HE FORESEES NO EFFORT ON GOC'S PART TO BRING THEM BACK INTO MEANINGFUL JOBS, EXCEPT FOR A FEW TOKEN FIGURES, PRIMARILY AMONG WRITERS AND FILM DIRECTORS WITH INTERNATIONAL REPUTATIONS. BYRNE

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